Our Mission

Jayhawk Area Agency on Aging, Inc. advocates on aging issues, builds community partnerships and implements programs within Shawnee, Jefferson, and Douglas counties to help seniors live independent and dignified lives.

- Is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization
- Is funded by tax-deductible contributions, federal funds, under state general funds and funds through local governments
- Does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex, national origin, age, religion, or disability
As I am writing this, the staff at Jayhawk Area Agency on Aging are gearing up for Medicare Open Enrollment. My favorite time of year! When this issue of Amazing Aging hits the street, we will be full swing in “Medicare Madness” as I like to refer to it. We help over 1,000 people during this short time.

For those of you who may not be aware, Medicare Open Enrollment runs from October 15-December 7. You have an opportunity to review your Medicare drug coverage needs and perhaps even save a few hundred dollars in the process. This is the time where you can review your current drug coverage and compare it to the other drug plan options available. You may change your drug plan if you choose. You can also review and compare Medicare Advantage Plans and enroll, dis-enroll, or change Medicare Advantage Plan options. Jayhawk Area Agency on Aging provides one-on-one counseling appointments to provide you with the information you need to be able to understand your Medicare options and to arm you with the tools to help make an informed decision about your Medicare coverage options.

November is National Family Caregiver Month. Family Caregivers play a vital role in helping older adults remain in their home. Caregiving can be difficult and caregivers can struggle to find the time to take care of themselves. Chances are you probably know a caregiver whom you may wish to help in some way. You might offer to be with their loved one so that they can have some “me time” or run to the grocery store. Perhaps you can call to see if they need you to pick anything up, drop by a meal so that they don’t have to cook, or just call and ask how they are doing. Often caregivers need someone to talk to (or who will just listen).

Call Kevin at (785) 841-9417 to place your display ad in the WINTER 2019 issue of Amazing Aging! The deadline is January 15.

Amazing Aging strives to provide readers with the information they need to live independent and productive lives. We also seek to feature stories of seniors who are active as workers, volunteers or engaged in hobbies. If you know a senior you would like to see featured in a future issue, please contact editor Marsha Henry Goff at mhgink@netscape.net or write to her in care of JAAA, 2910 SW Topeka Boulevard, Topeka, KS 66611.

Jayhawk Area Agency on Aging offers a range of services to family caregivers through the Older American’s Act (OAA) federal dollars. Services such as support groups, attendant care, homemaker, respite, and purchase of assistive items are available. In order to receive OAA Caregiver Support Services you must be a caregiver of any age for an individual age 60 or older.

Wishing everyone Happy Holidays and a Fantastic New Year from myself and the staff here at Jayhawk Area Agency on Aging!
By Marsha Henry Goff

As a child, Margaret Lewis loved the big white mulberry tree in yard of the large and elegant farmhouse where she grew up. The house was built by her father Fred V. Lewis in 1920 on land her grandfather David Hamilton Lewis settled in 1865.

After graduating from KU, she married David Shirk, a football, track and wrestling star athlete whom she met in college. After David's service in World War II, Margaret lived wherever his work as a high school physical education teacher and coach took their family, but she always returned to her parents' home in the summers and worked at KU while her mother cared for her children.

When her mother died in 1956, Margaret inherited the home and she and David lived happily in the shade of the tree until David's death in 2009 at the age of 93. Margaret continued to live there alone until her death in 2017 at the age of 100. She outlasted the tree, estimated to be 200 years old, which split in two in 2016, the north half crashing to the ground. "First the tree," Margaret Shirk said, "then I'll be next."

Her daughter Nancy Yonally, who now owns and lives in the home with her husband Jim, was horrified and exclaimed, "Mother!" The remaining half of the tree was taken down because it was feared to be dangerous, but the man with the tree service company left a tall portion of the trunk, saying, "That is perfect for carving."

Carving Jayhawks into the tree trunk seemed like a meaningful way to honor her parents, so Nancy called Dan Besco, doing business as Kansaw Carvings, who is licensed by KU — and pays

CONTINUED ON PAGE SIX
According to Martha Kistler, “Parkinson’s hasn’t slowed me down at all.” She has a don’t-stop-me-now spirit and explains that when she is too shaky to sew, she goes shopping for the fabric she uses for the stunning black-light quilts she creates. In other words, she adapts.

Parkinson’s, a progressive nervous system disorder affecting movement, is a disease that affects about one million people in the U.S., with 60,000 being diagnosed each year. The average age at onset is 60 and 50 percent more men than women are diagnosed with the disease.

Should you be diagnosed with Parkinson’s, know this: 25 percent of Parkinson’s diagnoses are wrong; if you have the disease, you are more likely to die with it than from it; symptom deterioration may be significantly slower in those who take a positive and proactive attitude toward the disease than those who do not.

Martha Kistler appears to have instinctively known this and, although she has been living with the disease since her diagnosis in 1998, she has refused to give into it. That is not to say that a positive attitude is enough to keep the disease at bay. Martha is fortunate and she knows it.

Read about Martha and her beautiful quilts in Topeka SR in Topeka Magazine.
Dementia can be difficult to detect

By Michele Dillon
JAAA ADRC Supervisor

One thing I hear a lot from caregivers is that family members that are not direct caregivers don’t recognize a memory issue. When they talk to mom on the phone, she sounds fine and they just don’t get it. Early-stage and sometimes even mid-stage dementia can be hard to detect if you’re not in the thick of it. Dementia victims are notoriously good at covering up memory loss. What can you do to help get everyone on the same page?

1.) The simplest way is to get a primary physician or a neurologist to write you a letter of documentation. This will also come in handy when you want to initiate use of the power of attorney.

2.) Document changes - keep track of how many meds are in their bottle. This is a good way to know how often they are remembering to take it. Are they losing weight and not eating as well? What about hygiene?

3.) Encourage family members to ask certain questions like, “What did you have for breakfast yesterday?” or, if you took your loved one somewhere, let the family member know and then they can ask, “So what did you do yesterday?”

4.) Keep an email chain and keep everyone informed as much as possible.

In the end, you can’t convince anyone if they are denial. Make sure it is just denial though. Keep track of finances and make sure other family members aren’t taking advantage.

CHAMPSS Orientation Sessions

Lawrence: Lawrence Public Library, first Monday of each month at 2 p.m.
November 5  December 3  January 7

Shawnee County: JAAA, first Wednesday of each month at 1:30 p.m. Shawnee residents must call JAAA receptionist to register for an orientation.
November 7  December 5  January 2

Jefferson County: residents may enroll at Topeka or Lawrence orientation sessions.

Guardian Angel Purchases
October 2017 through September 2018

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<th>Item</th>
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Total Guardian Angel Purchases 6,464.48
the university a royalty — to carve Jayhawks. While Besco has been carving with a chainsaw for 20 years, he has been licensed to carve Jayhawks for the last three years.

Nancy gave him free-reign to carve the tree as he wished. He says that the design depends on the tree and he had plenty of room to carve all of the six evolving Jayhawk mascots that have served KU, beginning with the first in 1912. At the top of the trunk, Besco carved a four-and-a-half-foot tall current mascot, the Happy Jayhawk, designed by Hal Sandy in 1946. He also carved an athletic shirt adorned with 55, one of her father’s numbers. At Nancy’s request, he embedded a Lawrence brick in the tree. She thought it appropriate because her father had a job working on city streets during summers while at college.

It took Besco about ten days to carve the tree and paint the Jayhawks. “Painting,” he says, “helps preserve the carvings.” He adds that the project was “by far the most meaningful carving I have done because of the family history … homesteaded in the 1860s. I just wish I could have met Margaret Shirk.”

It was her indomitable spirit, not her longevity, that made Margaret worth knowing. She was an astute investor and stockbroker, a volunteer for the Red Cross for almost 50 years and served as presiding judge of her election board for about 65 years. When she had breast cancer and a mastectomy in 1960, she was given a Mayo Clinic one-shot treatment of horse serum and, according to Margaret’s statement in a 2015 interview, “I’ve been galloping ever since.”

“And the week after her cancer surgery,” Nancy adds, “she was painting the bathroom because she didn’t want to get stiff.”

But the reason the carved Jayhawk tree is such an appropriate honor for Margaret and David Shirk is because of their love for KU sports. The couple had season tickets for KU football and basketball games since they were married in 1940 and never missed a home game if they were in the area. After David’s death, Margaret continued to be a fixture at games and greatly enjoyed dancing with the Baby Jay mascot that towered over her since she only measured four feet, six inches and weighed 70 pounds in her later life.

Though small, she was energetic and walked multiple laps every day on the sidewalk that circled her home, often followed, according to Nancy, by one critter or another. “One year she had a robin that stayed beside her. And then she had a rabbit that followed her as she walked. She walked 40 laps, then 30, 20, 10, then, when she got down to five, she’d walk one lap and then sit in a chair, then she’d walk the other way and sit in that chair.”

Nancy and Jim are carrying on her family’s legacy of enthusiastic and creative service. Jim is a former Kansas legislator, teacher, administrator and broadcaster. “For 41 years,” he says, “I have been photo steward for the Big 8, Big 12, Missouri Valley and NCAA basketball tournament. I sit right behind the photographers just off the court to make sure that they get in the

Please visit us online at www.jhawkaaa.org.
Nearing her 100th birthday, Margaret Shirk sits amid the wreckage of the 200-year-old white mulberry tree she loved.

Jayhawk tree

CONTINUED FROM PAGE SIX

proper place.”

Nancy is an avid crafter, teaches quilting and has a passion for genealogy. She did costumes for Overland Park’s Theatre in the Park and she and Jim, along with their sons, volunteered for the Renaissance Festival in Bonner Springs for 20 years. Nancy jokes that “Jim had to keep working to pay for the volunteer work.”

The couple is welcoming of people who visit to see the Jayhawk tree or who wish to take photos of it or with it. The portion of the tree containing the carvings is still alive, as evidenced by the growth at the bottom and, because Nancy had a company treat the portion that had termites, the Jayhawk tree should have a long life ahead of it. Rock chalk!

Medicare Open Enrollment
October 15 through December 7
Check out the many ways JAAA can help you decide on the best Medical Supplement and Part D Rx plans for you!

Schedule an appointment with JAAA
We will have appointments available at JAAA Monday-Friday 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. during open enrollment. We will begin taking appointments in late September for Open Enrollment. We are closed the following dates during open enrollment 11/12, 11/22 and 11/23. We have a limited number of appointments and they will be scheduled on a first come first serve basis.

Take part in a walk in clinic at JAAA
We are having the Saturday Clinics for Open Enrollment on the following Saturdays:

- October 20, 2018
- October 27, 2018
- November 3, 2018
- November 10, 2018
- December 1, 2018

From 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. — first come first served, those in door prior to 1:00 p.m. will be helped no matter how late we have to stay to do so. Please be aware that there may be a lengthy wait time.

Attend JAAA’s DIY Medicare Part D Classes
at Topeka/Shawnee County Public Library

We encourage everyone to consider attending the Medicare Part D DIY classes that JAAA provides at the Topeka/Shawnee County Public Library on the second Thursday of the month at 9:30 a.m. We will walk attendees step by step through the Medicare Plan Finder and explain how to navigate and understand the information being provided to you so that you can make an informed choice regarding your Medicare Part D plan. We provide this training year round so don’t wait until open enrollment and take the opportunity now!
When he was 11-years-old, someone asked Bob Carlson what he wanted to be when he grew up. He was quick with a reply: “I want to be a State Farm agent.” He admired and wanted to emulate his father, M. R. Carlson, a State Farm agent who had a 33-year career with the company.

But life set Bob on a different career path. After receiving a degree in education from Emporia State, he taught and coached in Nebraska and Topeka. He was happy teaching physical education and coaching wrestling at Topeka High and he and his wife Linda were expecting their fourth child in only two-and-a-half years (the middle children are twins).

“Changing careers was a pretty easy decision,” he says. “They offered me a $50 a year raise and I thought, Are you kidding me? I can’t raise four children on a $50 increase.”

Bob called his father’s manager and asked, “What’s the chance I can get on with State Farm?” He said, ‘Not very good, but if you want to go scratch in Lawrence, I’ll put you on.’ I said, ‘Let’s do it!’”

He admits that most people think he walked right into his dad’s business, but in fact they just shared office space. “I had a little bitty desk in the back corner of his office. “Mom was his primary secretary and they were both in the office, but neither of them gave me any advice from day one unless I asked for it which I was very proud of them for.”

All day long for two years, Bob knocked on doors trying to sell insurance. He set up night appointments, “two a day, five days a week, so I’d work until 9:00, 9:30 at night, then go home and see my little kids and put them to bed and kiss them good night. It was very hard, especially on Linda.”

The first month his manager, Harvey Haeker, walked with him. He remembers that, “Bob and I prospected day and night his first month for renters insurance. We both qualified for a company promotion of bookends with Civil War Canons which I treasure on my desk to this day. I was rewarded with Peanut Butter and jelly sandwiches at his home for lunch with his family.

One of the doors Bob knocked on belonged to a young couple, Mr. and Mrs. Jim Weaver, who became his first customers when he sold them auto and tenant homeowner’s policies. Fifty years later, they are still loyal customers. “He’s always there” says Weaver. “I’ve had a few claims through the years, auto, storm damage, and he has always taken good care of me. He’s very service oriented and has made unpleasant times quite manageable.”

Weaver also credits Bob with helping him build toward his retirement. “I’ve had good advice from relatives and others about saving for retirement. Bob was integral in that. He’s cream of the crop, a good friend. I developed a relationship with him and helped send his kids to college.”
Bob Carlson

If his customers regard him as a friend, the friendship is clearly reciprocated by Bob who says that the best thing about his job is, “Working with great people all day long! Everyone who comes in is just wonderful. I’ve had great clients.”

He says he has also been blessed with a great staff. “Jane’s been with me about 25 years and Jack’s just had his tenth anniversary. Jack used to bring his late elderly mother to work. Not many jobs where you can bring your dog and your mother to work.” Jack currently brings his chocolate lab, Summit, to the office, much to the enjoyment of customers. After their children were in school, Linda was a fixture in the office assisting Bob as did his mother for his father. Sadly, Linda died of lung cancer in 1998. Two lonely years later, Bob met Karen, his present wife. He asked another State Farm agent, Chris Monk, to set up a coke date with her for him and when Monk told Bob he thought she was younger than he was, Bob replied, “I don’t want to marry her. I just want to date her.”

The couple clicked and Karen was at the party celebrating Bob’s 50th year with State Farm. She is busy with her own business, CopperLeaf Gourmet, and jars of her Chocolate Raspberry Desert Topping — labeled with Bob’s photo and the words, “Thank you for letting me be your ‘Good Neighbor’ agent for 50 years!” — were gifts for clients attending the celebration.

Is retirement in Bob’s immediate future? Don’t bet on it. “My dad had 33 years in business. I never expected to get to 50 years. When I had 35, I thought, ‘Well, I beat Dad so now I can retire and that just didn’t happen. I enjoyed coming down here so I stayed with it every day.’” Fifty years on the job, he is still enjoying working with great clients and staff — all of whom are his friends — taking it one day at a time!

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**The First Apartments**

Independent Community—Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities

**Leave your yard and home maintenance to us! You’re invited to The First Apartments.**

- Studio, One Bedroom & Expanded One Bedroom Apartments providing:
  - emergency call button w/24 hr. staff
  - 24 hr. emergency maintenance
  - Individually controlled heat & air
  - balconies on each floor
  - covered patio by pond
  - small pets welcome

- Unique Service Coordinator Staff on site providing:
  - referral services to community agencies & service providers
  - resident advocate
  - community presentations
  - assistance with Medicare Part D plans

- We also offer:
  - Restricted access with phone/intercom system
  - Meals on Wheels site
  - Coffee Room
  - Laundry Room
  - Recreation Room w/ pool table and exercise equipment
  - Exercise classes
  - Salon
  - Community senior bus transportation
  - Red Carpet Library Service
  - Healthwise 55 Presentations
  - Storage locker for each apartment
  - City bus stops at front door

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We charge no entry fees. Our reasonable monthly rent includes utilities and maintenance costs. Applicants are encouraged to inquire about the availability of rent subsidy if their annual incomes meet HUD requirements.

Visitors and prospective residents are invited to schedule an appointment for a tour of our building and view an apartment. Residents are the principal priority to our staff. We provide an environment of independent living that encourages use of community resources.

Great location in the Seabrook neighborhood and surrounded by area churches, banks and shopping center.

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www.thefirstapartments.org
In the last issue of Amazing Aging, I mentioned that electric rates in all of the states surrounding Kansas had lower kilowatt per hour (kWh) rates. For example, Kansas kWh charge is 3.23 cents higher than Missouri’s rate. While those few cents do not sound alarming, you can determine what that translates to in actual dollars you spend on your electric bill.

To learn how much more you are paying per month than Missouri consumers, simply multiply your monthly kWh usage by .0323.

I did the math for my last 12 months of electric usage and I was surprised by the result. I live in an all-electric home heated and cooled by geothermal energy. When we built our home in 1995, we made it as energy efficient as possible with argon-filled, double-paned, low-E windows and blown-in wet cellulose insulation. I also live about 35 miles from Missouri which is why I multiplied by .0323 to see how much more I was paying than if I lived on the Missouri side of the line.

If I lived in Missouri and used the same amount of electricity, I would pay almost $700 per year less, $692.54 to be exact. My highest usage was in December of 2017 when the 3,220 kWh I used cost $104.01 more than if I lived in Missouri. My lowest usage was 1,061 kWh in October 2017 at a cost of $34.27 more.

I wrote to the Kansas Corporation Commission, the regulatory body for setting electric rates, and asked why Kansans paid more for the electricity they used than residents of the states surrounding us. The gentleman who answered is a program consultant with KCC and he responded that a KCC accountant told him that the commission is aware of that difference and is in the process of working on a rate study “to do a deeper dive into why Kansas electric rates are somewhat higher than those in neighboring states.”

He also wrote that: “Intuitively we know that Kansas has completed billions of dollars of environmental retrofits which were required by State and Federal environmental regulations, and other states have done less of this type of work. The renewable energy standard that Kansas was under for years also contributed to a buildout of our utility’s plant in service and transmission facilities, during a time of little to no load growth. Because all of this investment (required by law/and or approved through rigorous cost/benefit analyses) occurred during a time of little to no load growth, we have seen our rates escalate more than neighboring states. The reason that load growth matters is because the more billing units you have to spread fixed costs over, all other things being equal, the lower your rate will be.”

As is often the case when I ask a question, the answer evokes more questions. I did not ask all the questions that came to mind. For example I wondered if the retrofits were required by environmental regulations, why did other states do less? The answer may be that other states did what was required by the federal government and that they did not have to labor under the “renewable energy standard that Kansas was under for years [by state government regulations that] contributed to a buildout of our utility’s plant in service and transmission facilities, during a time of little to no load growth.”

Not all of the electricity Kansans use is generated in Kansas, but is purchased from other states. On the other

**Fast Facts**

**An Overview of the SPP System**

SPP has members in 14 states: Arkansas, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas and Wyoming.

- Service territory: 546,000 square miles (approx.)
- Substations: 4,929
- Generation plants: 735
- Miles of transmission: 66,497
- Coincident peak load: 50,622 MW (July 21, 2016)
- Generating capacity: 87,086 MW (based on nameplate capacity as of Jan. 1, 2018)
  - 41.5% natural gas
  - 29.7% coal
  - 20.2% wind
  - 3.9% hydro
  - 2.4% nuclear
  - 1.9% fuel oil
  - 0.1% other

**Energy production**: 266.4 TWh in 2017

- 45.3% coal
- 22.1% wind
- 19.1% natural gas
- 6.7% nuclear
- 6.4% hydro
- 0.2% other (fuel oil, solar, biomass)
Electric rates

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

hand, not all of the electricity generated in Kansas is used in Kansas, but is sold to other states. I expressed an interest in knowing how much we paid for electricity purchased versus how much we realized from electricity sold.

The program consultant was polite and patient in answering all of my questions and wrote back that: “Kansas utilities participate in the SPP [Southwest Power Pool] Integrated Market, so at times they are able to buy economy energy from the market instead of using generators in the state to provide the power. However, they are required to have the capacity from those generators in order to ensure the power is available if we need it. The prices that power is sold and bought is all public information and can be accessed real time at any time at SPP.org. Any profits that the utilities make selling energy out of their generators is credited back to customers through the ECA (Energy Cost Adjustment). Our utilities participating in the SPP IM has created savings, and those savings are passed back to other customers.”

If you have wondered about the few cents occasionally credited to your bill designated ECA, those few cents that are returned to you are profits from the sale of Kansas generated electricity to other states. The program consultant says that the purchase and sale of power is public information and can be accessed online at SPP.org. Sadly, it cannot be accessed by me and not for lack of trying.

If you have access to the Internet, I hope you will visit SPP.org and, if you are able to find the costs of power purchased and sold by Kansas utilities, please let me know. The adjacent box shows Fast Facts from the SPP.org website which tells you more about the Southwest Power Pool.

I paid $692.54 more for electricity during the past year than if I lived 35 miles east in Missouri. The extra amount you pay may be more or less than that, but one thing is certain: Because you live in Kansas, you are paying more for electricity than if you lived in Missouri or any one of the other states surrounding us. The reason may be explained, but, in my opinion, cannot be justified.

You may have recently received notification in your electric bill from Westar stating that: “On Sept. 27, 2018, new lower base rates were implemented, per the Kansas Corporation Commission’s (KCC) decision to approve a settlement in Westar Energy’s rate review.” The lower rates result from lower federal income tax rates and lower financing costs for Westar as well as savings from the merger with KCP&L.

Westar says that the average residential customer can expect to see an approximate $3.80 decrease per month. For me — if I am considered an average residential customer — that is a savings of $45.60 a year, meaning that I am still paying $646.94 more annually for electricity than if I lived in Missouri. When it comes to lower electric rates, this is one Border War that Kansas Westar customers are losing.

JAAA gets around!

Look for us!

Caregivers’ Support Groups

Baldwin Methodist Church, first Wednesday of each month, 1 p.m. - 2 p.m.
November 7 December 6 January 2

Topeka/Shawnee Library, second Monday of each month, 3:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.
November 12 December 10 January 14

JAAA, third Friday of each month, 12:00 noon - 1:00 p.m.
November 16 December 21 January 18

Events and Presentations

Medicare Monday, we’ll answer your Medicare questions, Topeka Public Library, 1 p.m. - 3 p.m.
November 6 December 5 January 7

Do It Yourself Medicare Part D, Topeka Public Library, second Wednesday of each month 9:30 a.m.
November 14 December 12 January 9

Grey Wolves in Meriden, Meriden United Methodist Church, third Tuesday of each month, 11 a.m.
November 20 December 18 January 15

Medicare Quarterly Evening, Topeka Public Library, 6:30 p.m. on January 10
Caregiver Support

Support groups are a place to receive and give support.

Many family caregivers need time to vent in a safe place.

1st Wednesday of the month @ Baldwin Methodist Church
708 Grove, Baldwin City, KS 1:00PM

2nd Tuesday of the month @ First Southern Baptist Church
4300 W 6th Street, Lawrence, KS 1:00PM

2nd Monday of the month @ Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library, Anton Room
1515 SW 10th Street, Topeka, KS 3:30PM

3rd Thursday of the month @ Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library, Perkins Room
1515 SW 10th Street, Topeka, KS 2:00PM

The meeting once a month is a gentle reminder that family caregivers need to put themselves first...even if only for a couple of hours each month!